News release

Thank the Gods of war...

1 June 2004

D-Day was another turning point in history whose outcome depended crucially upon the weather. Early June 1944 was unusually stormy - the night of the 4/5 June was the first night scheduled for the invasion, but the weather had other plans - the mission was postponed for 24 hours. As the wind and rain cleared the following night, the go-ahead was given and the rest is history.

The story behind the event is remarkable and the role played by the Met Office and in particular the senior forecaster Gp Capt Stagg, is a major part of it. The strain on individuals at that time must have been tremendous.

The essential weather requirements for the invasion were:

- A moonlit night
- Low tide around dawn
- Good visibility
- Light winds with little or no low cloud

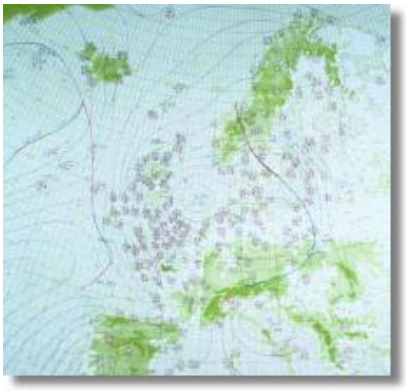
Eisenhower demanded accurate forecasts for seven days ahead, a very difficult task with the available technology, but a weather window was spotted and as the fronts cleared on the 5th the decision to go on the 6th was made.

The Met Office is justly proud of its part played during the operation and is displaying several historic documents from the period such as the actual chart used to brief Eisenhower, and Stagg's diaries.

Had the invasion been delayed until the next available tide, a memo from Stagg remarked that the troops would have run into the worst Channel weather for 20 years!

Eisenhower wrote on the bottom of the memo, "Thank the Gods of war we went when we did."

The D-Day 60th Anniversary Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum tells the planning and operational stories of D-Day with unique artefacts, paintings, film footage, sound recordings and documents. Amongst the critical documents on display are the **Met Office weather charts**, which plot the deteriorating weather conditions over the Channel and Northern France just before D-Day.
Visit the exhibition microsite



Notes to editors:

- The Met Office is celebrating its 150th anniversary this month
- The new Met Office headquarters in Exeter is being officially opened 21 June 2004

For further information:
Met Office Press Office +44 (0)1392 886655

Met Office Customer Centre 0870 900 0100
If you're outside the UK +44 (0)1392 885680

PRINTABLE VERSION

About
Met Office
Hadley Centre
Terms and conditions
Advertise on our site

News
News release archive
Media Centre

Learn
About the weather
From the bookshelf

Services
don't guess weathercall
Met Office forecasts by phone or fax...
Mobile text forecasts
Weathercall
Marinecall
Mountain weather
MetWEB
Talk to a forecaster

Links
Met Office data users
National met. services
Scientific interest sites
EA Floodline
Directgov
Freedom of Information

Contact
Contact us
Questions answered

© Crown copyright